

WE CLAIM:

1. A spa, comprising:
 - (a) a reservoir for holding water;
 - (b) an outer wall spaced outwardly from the reservoir;
 - 5 (c) an equipment bay located in and accessible from an opening at the top portion of the spa between the outer wall and the reservoir, wherein the equipment bay contains substantially all of the equipment necessary for the operation of the spa; and
 - (d) a cover over the opening to the equipment bay that can be opened
 - 10 from the top portion of the spa to permit access to the equipment bay, free of any obstructions around the outer wall of the spa.
2. The spa of Claim 1, further comprising a substantially horizontal coping that joins the reservoir to the outer wall, and wherein the opening to the equipment bay is provided in the coping.
- 15 3. The spa of Claim 1, wherein the cover may be sealed to the opening in a substantially watertight manner.
4. The spa of Claim 1, wherein the equipment for operating the spa includes a heater and a water pump.
5. The spa of Claim 4, wherein the equipment for operating the spa includes
- 20 a water filter comprising a filtration compartment normally flooded with water from the reservoir and filter cartridges for filtering impurities from the water.
6. The spa of Claim 1, further comprising reinforcing means located between the outer wall and the reservoir for supporting the outer wall against deformation from external forces, whereby the spa can be installed below ground level
- 25 and can withstand external forces from excavated ground applying pressure against the outer wall.
7. The spa of Claim 6, wherein the reinforcing means comprises a plurality of internal support elements that resist lateral external forces against the outer wall.
8. The spa of Claim 7, wherein the reinforcing means further comprises a
- 30 dense foam material or other suitable filler.

9. The spa of Claim 6, wherein the reinforcing means comprises a dense foam material or other suitable filler.

10. A spa, comprising:

(a) an inner wall defining a reservoir for holding water;

5 (b) an outer wall spaced from the inner wall, wherein the inner wall and the outer wall define a top surface that covers the space between the inner wall and the outer wall at an upper end of the spa, and wherein the outer wall includes

10 a bottom surface constructed to contact the ground and support the spa; and

a substantially vertical side wall extending from the bottom surface to the top surface;

15 (c) an equipment bay located in and accessible from an opening at the top surface of the spa between the inner wall and the outer wall that contains substantially all of the equipment for operating the spa, including a pump, a heater, a filter and control equipment; and

(d) a cover that covers the opening in the top surface of the spa, wherein the cover can be opened to permit access to the equipment in the equipment bay free of any obstructions around the vertical side wall of the spa.

20 11. The spa of Claim 10, further comprising reinforcing means located between the outer wall and the inner wall for supporting the spa, including the outer wall and its associated side wall, against deformation from external forces, such that the spa can be installed below ground level and can withstand external subjacent forces from the ground surrounding and abutting the outer wall.

25 12. The spa of Claim 11, wherein the reinforcing means comprises a plurality of internal support elements that structurally support the outer wall against external forces.

30 13. The spa of Claim 12, wherein the support elements comprise elongated rigid supports having one end connected to an inner surface of the side wall and another end connected to an inner surface of the bottom wall.

14. The spa of Claim 11, wherein the reinforcing means comprises a framework substantially supporting the outer wall, including a plurality of horizontal bottom support elements, a plurality of horizontal top support elements, a plurality of vertical support elements connecting the bottom support elements to the top support elements, and a plurality of bracing elements connected at an angle between the vertical support elements and the horizontal bottom elements.

15. The spa of Claim 14, wherein the framework is comprised of pressure treated wood.

16. A spa, comprising:

- (a) a reservoir for holding water;
- (b) a vertical outer wall surrounding the reservoir;
- (c) an equipment bay located in and accessible from an opening at a top portion of the spa between the outer wall and the reservoir, wherein the equipment bay contains substantially all of the equipment necessary for the operation of the spa;
- (d) a cover over the opening to the equipment bay that can be opened to permit access to the equipment in the equipment bay, wherein the cover is removable free of any obstructions around the perimeter of the outer wall; and
- (e) reinforcing means located between the outer wall and the reservoir for supporting the outer wall against deformation from external forces, such that the spa can be installed above ground or below ground level and can withstand subjacent external forces from the ground exerted against the outer wall.

17. A spa, comprising:

- (a) a reservoir for holding water;
- (b) an outer wall spaced outwardly from the reservoir;
- (c) an equipment bay that contains substantially all of the equipment necessary for the operation of the spa; and
- (d) reinforcing means located between the outer wall and the reservoir for supporting the outer wall against deformation from external forces, such that the spa can be installed above ground level or below ground level and

can withstand subjacent external forces from the ground exerted against the outer wall.

18. The spa of Claim 17, further comprising:

5 (a) an opening in the outer wall at a side of the spa through which the equipment in the equipment bay can be accessed;

(b) a cover over the opening to the equipment bay that can be opened to permit access to the equipment; and

10 (c) a shield over the opening at the side of the spa that can withstand deformation from external forces from the ground exerted against the shield, wherein the shield is spaced from the opening such that the spa can be installed below ground level and the equipment bay can be accessed by opening the cover.